

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 8-45, and 48-50 are presented for further examination. Claims 1, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 22, 24-28, 30, 34-36, 38-39, 41-42, 44-45, and 50 have been amended. Claims 7, 46, and 47 have been canceled.

In the Office Action mailed October 5, 2004, claims 1-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as indefinite for informalities in claim 1. Applicants have amended claim 1 to overcome the informalities and adopt the suggested corrections provided by the Examiner.

Claims 1-6, 10, 12, 16-17, 42, 43, and 45-46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by European Patent 0778698 (“Bard et al.”). Claim 33 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Bard. Claims 14 and 48 were rejected as obvious over Bard in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,487,024 (“Girardeau Jr.”). Claims 47 and 50 were objected to but found to be allowable if rewritten into independent form. Claims 7-9, 11, 13, 15, 18-32, 34-42, and 44 were not rejected over the art of record and hence would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of allowable claim 7. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 and all claims depending therefrom are clearly in condition for allowance. Claims 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 22, 24-28, 30, 34, 36, 38-39, 41-42, and 44 have all been amended to include the limitations of independent claim 1 and any intervening claims. Hence, each of these dependent claims are now rewritten into independent form and are allowable inasmuch as the dependent claims were not rejected over the art of record. All claims depending from these claims are also allowable.

Independent claim 45 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 47 and intervening claim 46. Hence, claim 45 is now allowable claim 47 rewritten into independent format. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 45 and dependent claims 48 and 49 are clearly in condition for allowance.

Claim 50 has been rewritten to include the limitations of claim 45 from which it depends. Hence, allowable claim 50 is now rewritten into independent format to include the limitations of claim 45. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 50 is also allowable.

In view of the foregoing, applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims in this application are now clearly in condition for allowance. In the event the Examiner finds minor informalities that can be resolved by telephone conference, the Examiner is urged to contact applicants' undersigned representative by telephone at (206) 622-4900 in order to expeditiously resolve prosecution of this application. Consequently, early and favorable action allowing these claims and passing this case to issuance is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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